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Little Journeys to
the Homes of Good
Men and Great :
by Elbert Hubbard :

—
Thomas Carlyle
—

JANUARY, 1895

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Announcement.

The publishers announce that LITTLE JOURNEYS will be issued monthly and that each number will treat of recent visits made by Mr. Elbert Hubbard to the homes and haunts of various eminent persons. The subjects for the first twelve numbers have been arranged as follows :

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. George Eliot | 7. Victor Hugo |
| 2. Thomas Carlyle | 8. Wm. Wordsworth |
| 3. John Ruskin | 9. W. M. Thackeray |
| 4. W. E. Gladstone | 10. Charles Dickens |
| 5. J. M. W. Turner | 11. Shakespeare |
| 6. Jonathan Swift | 12. Oliver Goldsmith |

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FOREWORD.

LITTLE JOURNEYS does not claim to be a "Guide" to the places described, nor a biography of the characters mentioned. The periodical, at best, will merely make outline sketches: the backgrounds being washed in with impressions of the scenes and surroundings made sacred by the lives of certain "Good Men and Great."

Stray bits of information, "the feathers of lost birds," will here be set down; various personal incidents will be lightly detailed, and some facts may be stated which have been told before.

If these random records of beautiful days spent in little journeys may brighten the pleasant recollections of a few of those who have already visited the places described, or add to the desire for further knowledge on the part of those who have not, the publication will have fully accomplished its mission.

P



THOMAS CARLYLE

One comfort is that great men taken up in any way are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man without gaining something by it. He is the living fountain of life, which it is pleasant to be near. On any terms whatsoever you will not grudge to wander in his neighborhood for a while.

Heroes and Hero-Worship.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

I.

ON my way to Dumfries I stopped over night at Gretna Green, which, as all fair maidens know, is in Scotland just over the border from England.

To my delight I found that the coming of runaway couples to Gretna Green was not entirely a matter of the past, for the very evening I arrived a blushing pair came to the inn and inquired for a "meenister." The ladye faire was a little stout and the worthy swain several years older than my fancy might have wished, but still I did not complain. The landlord's boy was despatched to the rectory around the corner and soon returned with

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the reverend gentleman. I was an uninvited guest in the little parlor, but no one observed that my wedding garment was only a cycling costume, and I was not challenged.

After the ceremony, the several other witnesses filed past the happy couple, congratulating them and kissing the bride. I did likewise, and was greeted with a resounding smack which surprised me a bit, but I managed to ask: "Did you run away?"

"Noo," said the groom, "noo, her was a widdie—we just coom over fram Ecclefechan"—then lowering his voice to a confidential whisper—"We'r goin' baack on the morrow. It's cheaper than to ha' a big, spread weddin'."

This answer banished all tender sentiment from me and made useless my plans for a dainty love story, but I seized upon the name of the place from whence they came:

"Ecclefechan! Ecclefechan! why that's where Carlyle was born!"

Thomas Carlyle

“Aye, sir, and he ’s buried there—a great mon he was—but an infideel.”

Ten miles beyond Gretna Green is Ecclefechan. A little village of stucco houses all stretched out on one street. Plain, homely, rocky, and unromantic is the country round about, and plain, homely, and unromantic is the little house where Carlyle was born. The place is shown the visitor by a good old dame who takes one from room to room, giving a little lecture meanwhile in a mixture of Gaelic and English which was quite beyond my ken. Several relics of interest are shown, and although the house is almost, precisely like all others in the vicinity, imagination throws round it all a roseate wreath of fancies.

It has been left on record that up to the year when Carlyle was married, his “most pleasurable times were those when he enjoyed a quiet pipe with his mother.”

To few men indeed is this felicity vouchsafed. But for those who have eaten oatmeal porridge in the wayside cot-

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tages of bonny Scotland, or who love to linger over *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, there is a touch of tender pathos in the picture. The stone floor, the bare white-washed walls, the peat smouldering on the hearth, sending out long fitful streaks, that dance among the rafters overhead, and the mother and son sitting there watching the coals—silent. The woman takes a small twig from a bundle of sticks, reaches over, lights it, applies it to her pipe, takes a few whiffs and passes the light to her son. Then they talk in low earnest tones of man's duty to man and man's duty to God.

And it was this mother who first applied the spark that fired Carlyle's ambition ; it was from her that he got the germ of those talents which have made his name illustrious.

Yet this woman could barely read and did not learn to write until her first-born had gone away from the home nest. Then it was that she sharpened a gray goose quill and labored long and pa-

Thomas Carlyle

tiently practicing with this instrument, (said to be mightier than the sword,) and with ink she herself had mixed—all that she might write a letter to her boy ; and how sweetly, tenderly homely and loving are these letters as we read them to-day !

James Carlyle with his own hands built, in 1790, this house at Ecclefechan. The same year he married an excellent woman, a second cousin, by name Janet Carlyle. She lived but a year. The poor husband was heartbroken and declared, as many men under like conditions had done before and have done since, that his sorrow was inconsolable. And he vowed that he would walk through life and down to his death alone.

But it is a matter for congratulation that he broke his vow. In two years he married Margaret Aitken—a serving woman. She bore nine children. Thomas was the eldest and the only one who proved recreant to the religious faith of his fathers.

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One of the brothers moved to Shiawassee County, Michigan, where I had the pleasure of calling on him, some years ago. A hard-headed man, he was: sensible, earnest, honest, with a stubby beard and a rich brogue. He held the office of school trustee, also that of pound master, and I was told that he served his township loyally and well.

This worthy man looked with small favor on the literary pretensions of his brother Tammias, and twice wrote him long letters expostulating with him on his religious vagaries. "I knew no good could come of it," sorrowfully said he, and so I left him.

But I inquired of several of the neighbors what they thought of Thomas Carlyle, and I found that they did not think of Thomas Carlyle at all. And I mounted my beast and rode away.

Thomas Carlyle was educated for the Kirk and it was a cause of much sorrow to his parents that he could not accept its beliefs. He has been spoken of as

Thomas Carlyle

England's chief philosopher, yet he subscribed to no creed, nor did he formulate one. However, in *Latter Day Pamphlets* he partially prepares a catechism for a part of the brute creation. He supposes that all swine of superior logical powers have a "belief," and as they are unable to express it he essays the task for them. The following are a few of the postulates in this creed of The Brotherhood of Latter-Day Swine :

"*Question.* Who made the Pig?

"*Answer.* The Pork-Butcher.

"*Question.* What is the Whole Duty of Pigs?

"*Answer.* It is the mission of Universal Pighood ; and the duty of all Pigs, at all times, is to diminish the quantity of attainable swill and increase the unattainable. This is the Whole Duty of Pigs.

"*Question.* What is Pig Poetry?

"*Answer.* It is the universal recognition of Pig's wash and ground barley, and the felicity of Pigs whose trough has been set in order and who have enough.

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“Question. What is justice in Pigdom?

“Answer. It is the sentiment in Pig nature sometimes called revenge, indignation, etc., which if one Pig provoke another comes out in more or less destructive manner; hence laws are necessary—amazing quantities of laws—defining what Pigs shall not do.

“Question. What do you mean by equity?

“Answer. Equity consists in getting your share from the Universal Swine-Trough, and part of another's.

“Question. What is meant by ‘your share’?

“Answer. My share is getting whatever I can contrive to seize without being made up into Side-meat.”

I have slightly abridged this little extract and inserted it here to show the sympathy which Mr. Carlyle had for the dumb brute.

One of America's great men, in a speech delivered not long since, said:

Thomas Carlyle

“From Scotch manners, Scotch religion, and Scotch whiskey, good Lord deliver us.”

My experience with these three articles has been somewhat limited ; but Scotch manners remind me of chestnut burrs—not handsome without, but good within. For when you have gotten beyond the rough exterior of Sandy you generally find a heart warm, tender, and generous.

Scotch religion is only another chestnut burr, but then you need not eat the shuck if you fear it will not agree with your inward state. Nevertheless, if the example of royalty is of value, the fact can be stated that Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Empress of India, is a Presbyterian. That is, she is a Presbyterian about one half the time—when she is in Scotland, for she is the head of the Scottish Kirk. When in England of course she is an Episcopalian. We have often been told that religion is largely a matter of geography, and here is a bit of something that looks like proof.

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Of Scotch whiskey I am not competent to speak, so that subject must be left to the experts. But a Kentucky colonel at my elbow declares that it cannot be compared with the Blue Grass article ; though I trust that no one will be prejudiced against it on that account.

Scotch intellect, however, is worthy of our serious consideration. It is a bold, rocky headland, standing out into the tossing sea of the Unknown. Assertive? Yes. Stubborn? Most surely. Proud? By all means. Twice as many pilgrims visit the grave of Burns as that of Shakespeare. Buckle declares "Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* has had a greater influence on civilization than any book ever writ—save none" ; and the average Scotchman knows his Carlyle a deal better than the average American does his Emerson : in fact four times as many of Carlyle's books have been printed.

When Carlyle took time to bring the ponderous machinery of his intellect to bear on a theme, he saw it through and

Thomas Carlyle

through. The vividness of his imagination gives us a true insight into times long since gone by ; it shows virtue her own feature, vice her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. In history he goes beyond the political and conventional—showing us the thought, the hope, the fear, the passion of the soul.

His was the masculine mind. The divination and subtle intuitions which are to be found scattered through his pages, like violets growing among the rank swale of the prairies, all these sweet odorous things came from his wife. She gave him her best thought and he greedily absorbed and unconsciously wrote it down as his own.

There are those who blame and berate : volumes have been written to show the inconsiderateness of this man toward the gentle lady who was his intellectual comrade. But they know not life who do this thing.

It is a fact that Carlyle never rushed to

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pick up Jeannie's handkerchief. I admit that he could not bow gracefully; that he could not sing tenor, nor waltz, nor tell funny stories, nor play the mandolin; and if I had been his neighbor I would not have attempted to teach him any of these accomplishments.

Once he took his wife to the theatre; and after the performance he accidentally became separated from her in the crowd and trudged off home alone and went to bed forgetting all about her, but even for this I do not indict him. Mrs. Carlyle never upbraided him for this forgetfulness, neither did she relate the incident to anyone, and for these things I to her now reverently lift my hat.

Jeannie Welsh Carlyle had capacity for pain, as it seems all great souls have. She suffered—but then suffering is not all suffering and pain is not all pain.

Life is often dark, but then there are rifts in the clouds when we behold the glorious deep blue of the sky. Not a day passes but that the birds sing in the

Thomas Carlyle

branches, and the tree tops poise backward and forward in restful, rhythmic harmony, and never an hour goes by but that hope bears us up on her wings as the eagle does her young. And ever just before the year dies and the frost comes, the leaves take on a gorgeous hue and the color of the flowers then puts to shame for brilliancy all the plainer petals of spring time.

And I know Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle were happy, so happy, at times, that they laughed and cried for joy. Jeannie gave all and she saw her best thought used—carried further, written out and given to the world as that of another, but she uttered no protest.

Xantippe lives in history only because she sought to worry a great philosopher ; we remember the daughter of Herodias because she demanded the head (not the heart) of a good man ; Goncril and Regan because they trod upon the withered soul of their sire ; Lady Macbeth because she lured her liege to murder ;

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Charlotte Corday for her dagger thrust ; Lucretia Borgia for her poison ; Sapphira for her untruth ; Jael because she pierced the brain of Sisera with a rusty nail, (instead of an idea) ; Delilah for the reason that she deprived Samson of his source of strength ; and in the *Westminster Review* for May, 1894, Ouida makes the flat statement that for every man of genius who has been helped by a woman ten have been dragged down. But Jeannie Welsh Carlyle lives in the hearts of all who reverence the sweet, the gentle, the patient, the earnest, the loving spirit of the womanly woman : lives because she ministered to the needs of a great man.

She was ever a frail body. Several long illnesses kept her to her bed for weeks, but she recovered from these, even in spite of the doctors who thoroughly impressed both herself and her husband with the thought of her frailty.

On April twenty-first, 1866, she called her carriage, as was her custom, and directed the driver to go through the park.

Thomas Carlyle

She carried a book in her hands, and smiled a greeting to a friend as the brougham moved away from the little street where they lived. The driver drove slowly—drove for an hour—two. He got down from his box to receive the orders of his mistress, touched his hat as he opened the carriage door, but no kindly eyes looked into his. She sat back in the corner as if resting; the shapely head a little thrown forward, the book held gently in the delicate hands, but the fingers were cold and stiff—Jeannie Welsh was dead—and Thomas Carlyle was alone.

II.

A LONG the Thames, at Chelsea, opposite the rows of quiet and well-kept houses of Cheyne Walk, is the "Embankment." A parkway it is of narrow green with gravelled walks, bushes, and trees, that here and there grow lush and lusty as if to hide the unsightly river from the good people who live across the street.

Following this pleasant bit of breathing space, with its walks that wind in and out among the bushes, one comes unexpectedly upon a bronze statue. You need not read the inscription : a glance at that shaggy head, the grave, sober, earnest look, and you exclaim under your breath, "Carlyle ! "

In this statue the artist has caught with rare skill the look of reverie and repose. One can imagine that on a certain night,

Thomas Carlyle

as the mists and shadows of evening were gathering along the dark river, that the gaunt form, wrapped in its accustomed cloak, came stalking down the little street to the park, just as he did thousands of times, and taking his seat in the big chair fell asleep. In the morning the children that came to play along the river found the form in cold, enduring bronze.

At the play we have seen the marble transformed by love into beauteous life. How much easier the reverse—here where souls stay only a day !

Cheyne Row is a little alley-like street, running only a block, with fifteen houses on one side, and twelve on the other. These houses are all brick and built right up to the sidewalk. On the north side they are all in one block, and one at first sees no touch of individuality in any of them.

They are old, and solid, and plain—built for revenue only. On closer view I thought one or two had been painted, and

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on one there was a cornice that set it off from the rest. As I stood on the opposite side and looked at this row of houses, I observed that Number Five was the dingiest and plainest of them all. For there were dark shutters instead of blinds, and these shutters were closed, all save one rebel that swung and creaked in the breeze. Over the doorway, sparrows had made their nests and were fighting and scolding. Swallows hovered above the chimney; dust, cobwebs, neglect were all about. And as I looked there came to me the words of Ursa Thomas :

“Brief, brawling day, with its noisy phantoms, its paper crowns, tinsel gilt, is gone ; and divine, everlasting night, with her star diadems, with her silences and her verities, is come.”

Here walked Thomas and Jeannie one fair May morning in 1834. Thomas was thirty-nine, tall and swarthy, strong ; with set mouth and three wrinkles on his forehead that told of care and dyspepsia. Jeannie was younger ; her face winsome,

Thomas Carlyle

just a trifle anxious, with luminous, gentle eyes, suggestive of patience, truth, and loyalty. They looked like country folks, did these two. They examined the surroundings, consulted together—the sixty pounds rent a year seemed very high! But they took the house, and T. Carlyle, son of James Carlyle, stonemason, paid rent for it every month for half a century, lacking three years.

I walked across the street and read the inscription on the marble tablet inserted in front of the house above the lower windows. It informs the stranger that Thomas Carlyle lived here from 1834 to 1881, and that the tablet was erected by the Carlyle Society of London.

I ascended the stone steps and scraped my boots on the well-worn scraper, made long, long ago by a blacksmith who is now dust, and who must have been a very awkward mechanic, for I saw where he made a misstroke with his hammer, probably as he discussed theology with a caller. Then I rang the bell and plied the

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knocker and waited there on the steps for Jeannie Welsh to come bid me welcome, just as she did Emerson when he, too, used the scraper and plied the knocker and stood where I did then.

And my knock was answered—answered by a very sour and peevish woman next door, who thrust her head out of the window, and exclaimed in a shrill voice :

“Look 'ere, sir, you might as well go rap on the curbstone, don't you know ; there's nobody livin' there, sir, don't you know.”

“Yes, madam, that is why I knocked !”

“Beggin' your pardon, sir, if you use your heyes you'll see there's nobody livin' there, don't you know !”

“I knocked lest offence be given. How can I get in ?”

“You might go in through the key-hole, sir, or down the chimney. You seem to be a little daft, sir, don't you know. But if you must get in perhaps it would be as well to go over to Mrs.

Thomas Carlyle

Brown's and brang the key," and she slammed down the window.

Across the street Mrs. Brown's sign smiled at me.

Mrs. Brown keeps a little grocery and bake shop and was very willing to show me the house. She fumbled in a black bag for the keys, all the time telling me of three Americans who came last week to see Carlyle's house, and "as how" they each gave her a shilling. I took the hint.

"Only Americans care now for Mr. Carlyle," plaintively added the old lady as she fished out the keys, "soon we will all be forgot."

We walked across the street and after several ineffectual attempts the rusty lock was made to turn. I entered. Cold, bare and bleak was the sight of those empty rooms. The old lady had a touch of rheumatism, so she waited for me on the door step as I climbed the stairs to the third floor. The noise-proof back room where *The French Revolution* was writ,

The Baunts of

twice over, was so dark that I had to grope my way across to the window. The sash stuck and seemed to have a will of its own, like him who so often had raised it. But at last it gave way and I flung wide the shutter and looked down at the little arbor where Teufelsdröckh sat so often and wooed wisdom with the weed brought from Virginia.

Then I stood before the fire-place, where he of the Eternities had so often sat and watched the flickering embers. Here he lived in his loneliness and cursed curses that were prayers, and here for near five decades he read and thought and dreamed and wrote. Here the spirits of Cromwell and Frederick hovered; here that pitiful and pitiable long line of ghostly partakers in the Revolution answered to his roll call.

The wind whistled down the chimney grewsomely as my footfalls echoed through the silent chambers, and I thought I heard a sepulchral voice say :

“Thy future life! Thy fate is it, in-

Thomas Carlyle

deed ! Whilst thou makest that thy chief question thy life to me and to thyself and to thy God is worthless. What is incredible to thee thou shalt not, at thy soul's peril, pretend to believe. Elsewhither for a refuge ! Away ! Go to perdition if thou wilt, but not with a lie in thy mouth, by the Eternal Maker, No ! ! ”

I was startled at first, but stood still listening ; then I thought I saw a faint blue cloud of mist curling up in the fireplace. Watching this smoke and sitting before it in gloomy abstraction was the form of an old man. I swept my hand through the apparition but still it stayed. My lips moved in spite of myself and I said :

“ Hail ! hardheaded man of granite-outcrop and heather, of fen and crag, of moor and mountain, and of bleak east wind, hail ! Eighty-six years didst thou live. One hundred years lacking fourteen didst thou suffer, enjoy, weep, dream, groan, pray, and strike thy rugged breast ! And

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yet methinks that in those years there was much quiet peace and sweet content ; for constant pain benumbs, and worry destroys, and vain unrest summons the grim messenger of death. But thou didst live and work and love ; howbeit, thy touch was not always gentle, nor thy voice low ; but on thy lips there was no lie, and in thy thought no concealment, and in thy heart no pollution.

“But mark ! thou didst come out of poverty and obscurity : on thy battered shield there was no crest and thou didst leave all to follow truth. And verily she did lead thee a merry chase !

“Thou hadst no Past but thou hast a Future. Thou didst say : ‘Bury me in Westminster, never ! where the mob surges, cursed with idle curiosity to see the graves of kings and nobodies ? No ! Take me back to rugged Scotland and lay my tired form to rest by the side of an honest man—my father.’

“Thou didst refuse the Knighthood offered thee by royalty, saying ‘I am not

Thomas Carlyle

the founder of the house of Carlyle and I have no sons to be pauperized by a title.'

"True, thou didst leave no sons after the flesh to mourn thy loss, nor fair daughters to bedeck thy grave with garlands, but thou didst reproduce thyself in thought, and on the minds of men thou didst leave thy impress. And thy ten thousand sons will keep thy memory green so long as men shall work, and toil, and strive, and hope."

The wind still howled. I looked out and saw watery clouds scudding athwart the face of the murky sky. The shutters banged, and shut me in the dark. I made haste to find the door, reached the stairway—slid down the banisters to where Mrs. Brown was waiting for me at the threshold.

We locked the door. She went across to her little bake shop and I stopped a passing policeman to ask the way to Westminster. He told me.

"Did you visit Carlyle's 'ouse?" he asked.

Thomas Carlyle

"Yes."

"With old Mrs. Brown?"

"Yes, she waited for me in the doorway—she had the rheumatism so could not climb the stairs."

"The rheumatism—Huh! I see—you couldn't 'ire 'er to go inside. Why, don't you know?—they say the 'ouse is 'aunted!"

LONDON, *August*, '94.

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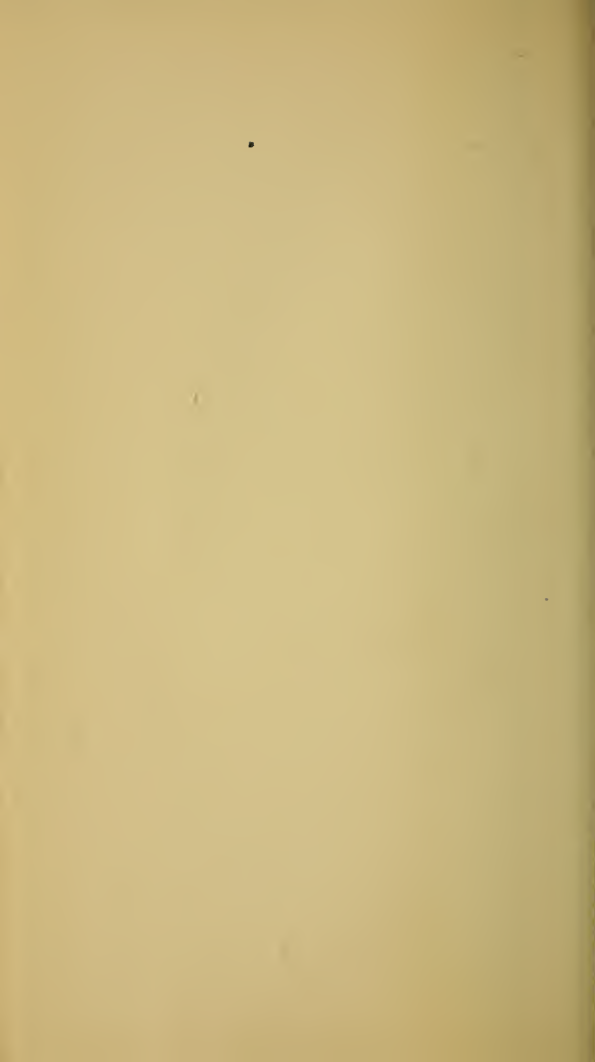
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